

THE CLEVELAND
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Archives

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FANS: EAST AND WEST

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An exhibition drawn from several Museum collections, with loans from local collections, presents fans made in Japan, China, northern Europe, and around the Mediterranean during the last thousand years. About forty fans are on exhibition in Gallery 102, gathered by Henry Hawley, Chief Curator of Later Western Art.

Folding fans--an ingenious arrangement of sticks or "blades" with a "leaf" of paper or silk attached--were probably invented in Japan in the seventh century; from there, the concept spread first to China and then throughout the world. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans had used fans, but they were largely neglected in the West, except for ceremonial purposes, until the Renaissance, when they attracted interest as luxurious accessories. Inspired by the cult of admiration for all things Japanese in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many Western artists made paintings shaped like the leaves of folding fans, never expecting their fan-shaped paintings to be made into fans. In China, much earlier, where the melon-shaped paper or silk of a screen (non-folding) fan became a standard format for painters, particularly successful fan paintings were often removed from their sticks and remounted as album paintings, the form in which early Chinese fan paintings have come down to us.

The tradition of Far Eastern fan painting, traced in this exhibition, suggests that fan painting as a significant artistic expression developed in China and Japan much earlier than in the West. Distinguished Chinese artists such as Ma Lin (Southern Song dynasty, mid-13th

century) and Zhao Mengfu (Yuan dynasty, 1254-1322) are represented here. All Japanese fans on exhibition are from the Edo period or later. The last of the great decorative painters, Sakai Hoitsu (1761-1828), who painted the handsome *Paulownia* screen in the Museum collection, made a *Folding Fan Mounted as a Painting: Chrysanthemums by the Water*, using ink, color, and gold on paper. Watanabe Kazan (1793-1841), creator of the famous portrait of the Japanese giant Ozora Buzaemon in the Museum collection, painted the *Folding Fan: Portrait of Kosukoku*, also using ink, color, and gold on paper. One of the most unusual fans from the Museum's Asian holdings is *Fan: Training a Horse on the Northern Frontier*, by Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1768), an Italian Jesuit who lived for many years at the Chinese Imperial Court in Beijing, where he adopted the name Lang Shining. He brought European painting practices to China and adjusted them to traditional Chinese painting materials, influencing many Chinese artists. In this fan, Castiglione painted the horse while his Chinese associate Jiao Bingzhen was responsible for the groom and the landscape setting.

Because European fans made earlier than the mid-19th century are almost never documented, it is difficult to determine when, where, or by whom they were made. The anonymous *Folding Fan: Mythological Scene with Diana*, is believed to have been made in Rome about 1730, its use of classical antiquity as subject emblematic of Europe's widespread regard for ancient scenes and narratives, as evident in the fans as in the paintings and sculptures of 18th-century Italy. Its tortoiseshell frame, decorated with gilt, carries a "leaf" of skin with gouache design.

Slightly later, in about 1760, a *Folding Fan: A Children's Game* depicts, in a central vignette possibly based on a French engraving, what appears to be a variant on blind-man's-bluff played by boys and girls in a woodland setting. The landscape in the background and the sailing ships at anchor on either end of the leaf are probably derived from a Dutch source. Its paper

leaf, decorated with gouache, is attached to a distinctive ivory frame of a type made in the Netherlands.

A brisé (folding) fan has only blades and no leaf. Believed to be French, of about 1825, a brisé fan made of curvilinear sticks of blonde horn is joined together by a white silk ribbon, and the horn is pierced and inlaid with silver-colored metal. Also believed to be French, and from about 1870, is a folding fan with a leaf of black lace called "Chantilly" over silk lining, all on a mother-of-pearl frame. This fan is lent by the Hinman B. Hurlbut Estate.

Some distinguished artists in the West, from Agostino Carracci and Jacques Callot to Antoine Watteau and Francois Boucher (one fan in the exhibition bears his spurious inscription) made fans, but no surviving examples can be attributed to them. European fans as we know them today seem to have been made by skillful practitioners of painting and ivory carving rather than innovators of distinction. This pattern was disrupted at the end of the 19th century, when artists of manifest ability and originality began to produce paintings in the shape of folding fans to be kept in portfolios or framed. Among the works in this exhibition is an example by Paul Gauguin, a testimony to a brief but intense burst of creative energy in the European history of fan making.

Free gallery talks are scheduled for 1:30 pm on Wednesday, January 20, and Sunday, January 24.

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